Leading the Change Together:
A National Impact Agenda for the Preservation Movement
Draft Guiding Principles, Goals, and Actions Framework for Discussion

A CALL FOR CHANGE
Recent national and global events including the ongoing pandemic, climate-related disasters, and acts of abhorrent social injustice have increased the urgency of addressing longstanding challenges. The complexity and scale of these challenges require all preservationists to become even more innovative, nimble, and collaborative. Now is the time for us to bring together our diverse perspectives and values and create positive change. We must all discover our own roles in leading this change.

Through PastForward Town Halls, national surveys, and focus groups, the National Trust is hearing an increasingly urgent call for change in the preservation movement. Preservationists are seeking new tools to recognize, protect, and interpret a larger and more diverse range of historic places. Many are pressing our field to respond more forcefully to the challenges we face as a society today, from climate change to racial injustice and social inequity. In a recent national survey of over 2,000 people in the preservation field, more than 84 percent of respondents expressed a desire for change in the practice of preservation.¹

The purpose of Leading the Change Together is to help guide and inspire the preservation movement to work collectively and collaboratively towards a vision for strategic change. Leading the Change Together is based on the understanding that many of our existing challenges are structural, and that broad effort involving all aspects of the field will be needed to build a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable future.

A CROWDSOURCED FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
Leading the Change Together aspires to reflect a multitude of perspectives across the preservation movement. The National Trust reviewed past reports, surveys, and publications generated by the preservation movement in recent years to guide our conversations. Building off of these insights, the National Trust has facilitated over 55 discussion sessions to date reaching over 425 people, including members of local and statewide preservation nonprofits, Main Street organizations, municipal planning and preservation programs, National Trust Advisors, emerging preservation leaders, building trades experts, public lands advocates, historic sites staff, museum directors, and affinity groups and representatives from African American, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ preservation communities. We hired coordinators to help us reach more people to build bridges across preservation networks. We recognize and cherish the reality that many people represent perspectives of multiple and intersectional identities, affiliations, and communities.

These discussions will continue through PastForward 2021 and future conferences over the next few years to reach more perspectives. To help carry the important responsibility of stewarding and sharing out these crowdsourced ideas for change, we hope people across the movement will shape, challenge, and engage with this content so it can better represent the many priorities of the dynamic preservation movement today.

REFLECTING SHARED PRINCIPLES
While the spectrum of professions that collectively make up the preservation movement includes many disparate organizations and practices that serve different roles, the field is guided by a range of interconnected guiding

principles that motivate and inspire our work today. We expect the following list to grow and shift through more public input and hope to spark additional dialogue and collaboration:

**GOALS SUMMARY**

Building on these principles, below are seven goals that aspire to represent steady-state positive outcomes for the preservation field as a result of desired change. These goals reflect what the National Trust team is hearing are current top priorities for change that apply broadly across an expansive preservation movement. To date, we have listened closely to a wide variety of perspectives and endeavored to develop a set of shared goals that can be relevant to people engaged in the many different vital activities that are encompassed by the preservation movement, including interpretation specialists, historians, tradespeople, planners, Main Street staff, stewards of historic sites, funders, regulators, conservators, developers, policy specialists, advocates, educators, and so many others.

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To date, the National Trust has also heard hundreds of suggestions for concrete actions that people across the movement identified as potential pathways—large and small—to achieve these goals and create positive change.
in preservation. These actions highlight the need for continued change both internally in terms of how the field operates, and externally in terms of the outcomes preservation produces in the world. By elevating and sharing a collection of more specific and concrete crowdsourced ideas as a public resource, we hope that more people in preservation will be inspired to identify new actions that they can lead and act on, as well as continue generating their own ideas for change wherever they see gaps and the greatest need.

The preservation movement is comprised of many different practices, focuses, and ideologies. Not all of the goals and actions will resonate with everyone. We invite individuals, organizations, and institutions of the preservation movement to reflect on these ideas and what others across the movement are saying and doing, and to identify and shape their own pathway toward leading the change together.

*Each of the seven goals are shared below as the draft organizing framework for action. A few sample highlights of the different types of suggested crowdsourced actions are bulleted below each goal statement to stimulate conversation and further brainstorming. These goals are not prioritized. The actions are illustrative, but they do not include everything we heard. The source of each idea is indicated in parentheses at the end of each suggested action and words may be paraphrased based on focus group discussion notes. For more information on focus group outreach, please visit this link.*

**GOAL 1: GROWING, COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS** | **Cultivate and support collaborative, effective grassroots preservation networks and partnerships with allied fields to address critical needs.**

- “Establish a national design center to support grassroots organizations to assist with developing marketing materials/grant applications, social media videos/TikToks/Instagram reels to bring in younger audiences.” *(Source: Diversity Scholars focus group)*
- “Offer a certification or credential program that can increase the profile of smaller organizations doing preservation work to indicate that they meet standards of work quality.” *(Source: Diversity Scholars focus group)*
- “Create new partnerships/cross-discipline conversations to learn how preservation impacts other disciplines and pursuits outside of the field.” *(Source: State Historic Preservation Offices focus group)*
- “Reduce gatekeeping of preserving diverse heritage, empower people doing this work by connecting them to resources/opportunities/networking/projects/collaborations.” *(Source: Emerging professionals focus group)*
- “Offer peer to peer mentoring for preservation in African American neighborhoods. Build a network among grant recipients for African American cultural heritage projects.” *(Source: Action Fund grant recipients focus group)*
- “Create a central place and or platform to share thought leadership and resources around Queer history projects.” *(Source: LGBTQ heritage professionals focus group)*
- “Spur more collaboration and partnership with planning fields to bring more expertise and figure out how we fit into the bigger picture.” *(Source: Latinx heritage professionals focus group)*
- “Partner with realtors, who often serve as the key conduit of information to potential buyers on historic properties and historic designation programs, and well as non-profit community development and housing organizations.” *(Source: Big city planners focus group)*

**GOAL 2: A REPRESENTATIVE MOVEMENT** | **Increase the diversity of people who lead and carry out preservation work to ensure that the preservation movement better represents all Americans.**
• “Use recruiting and scholarships as incentives to encourage more diverse individuals to study preservation, and also diversify our own faculty.” *(Source: Preservation educators focus group)*

• “Modify existing accreditation programs and proactively address issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and relevancy.” *(Source: Historic sites focus group)*

• “Create trades training as a specialty for those who are already in the construction industry to help address the dearth of skilled preservation tradespeople.” *(Source: Preservation tradespeople focus group)*

• “Ensure pay equity through transparent and fair compensation practices including: listing salaries on job postings, offering paid internships, and not basing compensation on past salary.” *(Source: Emerging professionals focus group)*

• “Find ways to better align trades training programs with potential students, and to connect graduates with apprenticeships to keep them in the field.” *(Source: Preservation tradespeople focus group)*

• “Intentionally attract and retain diverse staff members, and mentor more diverse staff to take on leadership positions.” *(Source: State and local preservation organizations focus group)*

GOAL 3: MODERNIZED, EXPANDED TOOLS  |  Update preservation tools and practices so more Americans can recognize, interpret, protect, and activate a larger and more diverse set of historic places and landscapes.

• “Make preservation guidelines more flexible to help achieve a balance between preservation and continued use.” *(Source: Main Street network focus group)*

• “Advocate for changes to the federal Historic Tax Credit so it can be used for smaller projects” *(Source: State and local preservation organizations focus group)*

• “Classify natural resources as a heritage, not just buildings. Natural resources represent very different narratives. The foundations need to be there for the actual native stories.” *(Source: Pacific Islander heritage professionals focus group)*

• “Secure additional funding for surveys and documentation to help lower barriers to listing diverse sites on the National Register.” *(Source: State Historic Preservation Offices focus group)*

• “Include oral histories (particularly amongst immigrant communities focus group) to inform preservation studies and historic designations.” *(Source: Emerging professionals focus group)*

• “Include local community members and stakeholders as equal “co-creators” with preservation experts to ensure that the community helps decide what stories to tell.” *(Source: Historic sites focus group)*

• “Grants should encourage or require collaboration. For example, a grant for a traveling exhibit that would travel to multiple communities and be supported by multiple organizations could be given priority for funding. We need to incentivize collaboration. Not just among nonprofits, but private entities as well.” *(Source: Asian American heritage professionals focus group)*

GOAL 4: EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES  |  Intentionally harness the power of preservation to respond to historic and current inequities and meet present-day needs of people and businesses.

• “Foster community empowerment and self-determination—promote the ability for people to have the authority to manage the places we directly descend from (rather than outsiders focus group). Take back authority and assert the roles of descendants as the stewards of our history and cultural practices.” *(Source: Pacific Islander heritage professionals focus group)*

• “Review existing design guidelines to ensure that preserving integrity does not result in preservation laws being used as a tool to keep out affordable housing.” *(Source: Main Street network focus group)*

• “Build up real estate arms of preservation orgs, leverage community land trusts, tools of real estate, funding for capital projects, etc.” *(Source: Latinx heritage professionals focus group)
• “Need to find a way to manage change without creating a financial burden to the community that we are trying to acknowledge and honor.” *(Source: Big city planners focus group)*
• “Take a critical look at all of our preservation policies and practices through an equity lens. How are we creating unreasonable barriers to entry on historic designation or preservation compliance?” *(Source: Big city planners focus group)*
• “Expand legacy business programs and use of queer cultural district policies to protect LGBTQ history from displacement.” *(Source: LGBTQ heritage professionals focus group)*
• “Determine preservation’s role in displacement.” *(Source: State and local preservation organizations focus group)*
• “Increase access to capital and increase digital literacy which are currently barriers to economic development in rural areas.” *(Source: Main Street network focus group)*

**GOAL 5: CLIMATE RESILIENCE** | Conserve, reuse, and retrofit older buildings to reduce carbon emissions, while at the same time adapting historic places to withstand current and future climate impacts.

• “Provide clear guidelines about the sustainable use of materials for rehabilitation and restoration.” *(Source: Main Street network focus group)*
• “Put equity at the forefront of climate change and ensure that preservation is reflected in Biden Administration’s plans and seen as a priority in planning processes.” *(Source: NTHP Advisors focus group)*
• “Welcome solar panels and other green technology in historic districts and on historic properties – embrace and demonstrate that – not hide it.” *(Source: The Relevancy Project focus group)*
• “Support more flexibility around windows and embrace new products/technology to make them more energy efficient.” *(Source: The Relevancy Project focus group)*
• “Help our nation understand the benefits of preserving and recycling entire structures. Focus on conservation of resources as a strategy to address climate change.” *(Source: Saving Places survey)*

**GOAL 6: AN ENGAGED PUBLIC** | Reach broader audiences and cultivate greater support through enriched storytelling and accessible communication.

• “Include community voices as equal participants along with trained interpretive specialists as decisions are being made about what stories to tell and how to tell them.” *(Source: Historic sites focus group)*
• “Create bilingual tools to educate local community and create awareness around preservation tools/opportunities to support community needs.” *(Source: Latinx heritage professionals focus group)*
• “Do more research about the beneficial health impacts of preservation – mental, physical, and public health.” *(Source: Relevancy Project)*
• “Make preservation more inclusive by using accessible language, adding more technology to improve participation.” *(Source: Preservation commissions focus group)*
• “Explore new mediums of communication, including gaming, film, digital education, short form content, to engage younger generations in preservation.” *(Source: Emerging professionals focus group)*
• “Create more opportunities to hear all the diverse perspectives associated with diverse sites on public lands. When we are telling painful stories, find ways to engage the voices that are the most important.” *(Source: Public lands stakeholders focus group)*
• “Communicate that preservation is a tool for economic development, equitable real estate, and creating value in the community using vocabulary like heritage and culture to connect with BIPOC communities.” *(Source: Main Street network focus group)*
GOAL 7: A TRUER HISTORY | Expand interpretation and truth telling at historic places to reflect an inclusive and multilayered shared history to advance justice and equity.

- “We need to find ways for people in our country to step into the shoes of others to empathize. But the way that our history has been written in America doesn’t represent all of the narratives that can be represented or shared. Preservation is a way to recognize sites and buildings that can help to tell that story.” (Source: African American heritage professionals focus group)
- “Reach out and connect with BIPOC LGBTQ groups to record intersectional histories and spark dialogue. Interpretation and preservation efforts must be intersectional avoid being presented as segregated efforts.” (Source: LGBTQ and BIPOC heritage professionals focus group)
- “Document and find ways to recognize demolished buildings that may or may not have been razed as part of displacement particularly related to communities that have been historically marginalized.” (Source: LGBTQ and BIPOC heritage professionals focus group)
- “Work across organizations to remove systemic barriers (including existing biases and lack of cultural competency focus group) that currently inhibit efforts of historic sites to shine a light on inclusion and equity issues.” (Source: Historic sites focus group)
- “Encourage national accreditation programs to strengthen guiding standards around inclusion and equity.” (Source: Historic sites focus group)
- “Elevate the importance of oral histories in capturing stories of people who are still here. Collect oral histories from the older queer community and from those living in the south and rural communities.” (Source: LGBTQ and BIPOC heritage professionals focus group)
- “Focus on indigeneity as the root and foundation of our story. Recognize that not all of us chose to be Americans. Face up to the bad things too. It is part of our history. We must acknowledge our imperial past.” (Source: Pacific Islander heritage professionals focus group)

PASTFORWARD 2021 & BEYOND

The annual PastForward conference will provide an ongoing opportunity to reflect upon the goals identified in Leading the Change Together and the movement’s shared progress towards meeting them. We will use PastForward 2021, with its theme of “Lead the Change,” to share the movement’s progress thus far and engage the field in refining the seven goals we have collectively developed. We will use both PastForward 2022 in Miami and the 2023 conference in Washington, DC as opportunities to revisit these goals and hold each other accountable to meeting them.

Following PastForward 2021, we will create a web presence for Leading the Change Together that will live on the Saving Places website and Preservation Leadership Forum. We will continue to integrate input generated by the public. Based on this input, we will elaborate on each of the goals by including four components of content to further illuminate ideas for change that each of us can lead: a brief context statement for each goal; case studies from across the field that demonstrate many of these ideas for change-in-action; crowdsourced ideas for additional action across the field; and an articulation of the National Trust’s own commitments to action. We hope other leaders across the preservation field will join in sharing their own commitments to leading the change through this platform to further inform and inspire.